



Date: August 16, 2011

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Theodore L. Voorhees, Deputy City Manager
From: Rhonda B. Parker, Director, Parks and Recreation
Subject: Acceptance of 2012 Adopt a Trail Grant from Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Executive Summary

In August 2011, the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) awarded an Adopt-A-Trail grant to the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Department. The grant of \$5,000 will provide funding for the renovation of the bridge at Sandy Creek Park which connects trails in the park on both sides of the creek.

Recommendation

The Administration recommends that the City Council adopt the 2012 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Project Ordinance and authorize the City Manager to execute a grant agreement in the amount of \$5,000.

Background

Sandy Creek Park is located on a former wastewater treatment site. This land for this park was acquired by the City of Durham in 1928 and 1929. In the 1960's the treatment plant was taken out of service, though this site was used for disposal of storm debris after Hurricane Fran in 1996. The City of Durham used the site as wetlands mitigation for the construction of the Martin Luther King parkway in the mid to late 1990's, agreeing to encumber the site with two conservation easements for a wetlands area; and the state's Ecosystem Enhancement Program has constructed and manages the site wetlands. During that period, the City removed most of the old existing treatment plant facilities and turned the site over to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to manage as a City park facility. In 1999 DPR submitted an application to the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to construct an asphalt trail, a picnic shelter, rest room facility and parking lot; this application was awarded and the project was completed in 2003.

Sandy Creek Park and Trail is now a popular park with the public as well as DPR's Environmental Education program. It is an especially popular site for bird watching, with over 120 birds identified in the park by the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee. The park is listed as a "Birding Hot Spot" at www.eBird.org. The park is used by the DPR Environmental Education staff for summer day camp as well as for programs that introduce youth to stream environments and birding. The Upper School of Durham Academy is located at one end of the trail, and the school adopted the park in 2004 and utilizes the trail and park for science classes and service projects. An assisted living facility is next to the park.

Residents and their family members make use of the paved trail, which is accessible to those who use wheelchairs or other aids in walking.

The old driveway bridge that crosses Sandy Creek has been closed to park users since the site was decommissioned. This bridge leads from the paved trail across the creek to the site of the Wetlands Restoration area. While an engineer has verified that the bridge is structurally sound, there are several holes in the asphalt and wooden decking that pose safety hazards. DPR, in partnership with the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission, Durham Academy, and the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee proposes to remove the asphalt and replace it with wooden decking. In addition, DPR will install handrails along the bridge. The bridge is wide enough (16 ft) to allow for walkers to use the center section and provide accessible space for others to sit along the side of the bridge for creek viewing and bird watching. Refurbishing the bridge will also allow walkers access to the natural trail through the wetlands and into the forested area in the western portion of the park.

Issues/Analysis

Expenditures for this project are to be reimbursed up to the \$5,000 award amount. The partner agencies listed above have agreed to provide volunteer service for implementation of this project.

Alternatives

The City Council could choose not to adopt the proposed grant project ordinance; DPR would not accept the grant from DENR for the renovation of the bridge at Sandy Creek Park.

Financial Impact

The grant for \$5,000 does not require a match. There is no known negative financial impact to receiving this grant.

Attachments:

Grant Project Ordinance for the 2012 Adopt-A-Trail Grant Project
Award letter from NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources.